

# The Athenian Mercury:

Saturday, January 16. 1691.

Quest. 1. **W** Hether Hobbs or Lestrange the better Christian?

*Ans.* We might with justice enough get off from this Question, by rejecting it among those unanswerable ones which we have already told the World we'll have nothing to do with. But that we mayn't altogether seem to put a sleight on two such Persons of Quality, we'll see if we can make any thing of 'em. For Mr. Hobbs, its notorious to any who have but cast an Eye on his Works, that he owns none but a material God, that he holds an absolute Fatal necessity for the worst actions, that he denies Hell, or any future Punishments, that he lessens, if not quite destroys the Miracles of our Saviour himself, as well as those recorded in the Old Testament, that he perfectly confounds Power and Right, and makes Justice nothing but Custom, which can end in nothing but destroying the Eternal difference of good and evil, (as indeed any man must, who owns the fatal necessity) That agreeable to his Notion of Power, &c. he teaches absolute obedience, without any reserve so much as of Gods Law, from the People to the King, (and according to the same Principle) from King to People too, if they get uppermost, and finds fault in his *Bebemoth* with the Author of the *Whole Duty of Man*, for affirming, that we ought not to obey the Prince when he exacts any thing contrary to the commands of God. Last of all, that we may effectually judge what a Christian he was, his avow'd Principles, if not his positive Assertions, plainly infer the *Alchoran* of equal Authority with the *H. Bible*, nay Superiour to it under the *Turkish Dominions*, for both he and his Disciples ground their belief of our Bible only on the Authority of the State that enjoyns it; whence 'tis easily infer'd, that shou'd Authority enjoyn the *Alchoran*, or shou'd any of 'em live under that Authority which did enjoyn it, they must embrace it as the Gospel, the Religion of the State being to conclude theirs, and all the Martyrs a parcel of Fools, and worse, as they'll not stick to call 'em. Then for the goodness of his Temper, his frank Disposition and Humour, his Ingenuity and Courage, and Quality, they were just as remarkable as his Religion, and were of a piece with it. However, this we can't without injustice deny, that he was an universal Scholar, tho' unless we are mistaken, more a sharp Wit, than a deep or sound Philosopher. And to this ill-natur'd Wit of his, which he did not want, was added an excellent English Philosophical Style, it being indeed his Master-piece, that he cou'd express hard things in plain and easie words, whereas most others affect the quite contrary; and this he knew so well, and was so proud of, that he'd be very angry sometimes with things because express'd in such words as did not please him, and worry one for the sake o' t'other, as we have formerly had occasion to observe — But we have been so long busie with Mr. Hobbs, that Sir Rogers Christianity will have hardly any room. However, we must do him the Justice to think he has a little more on't than the other, and that he has at least as much Christianity as Tully and Seneca, whom he translated, both of which believ'd and defended some Truths which Mr. Hobbs did not; both talk very well, and the latter, if we may believe *Causin*, was a kind of a Christian. Its true, there are some Articles of Mr. Hobbs's Creed, which seem to be explain'd in the old Observators, as of absolute Submission and Power, &c. But we have no proof that he believ'd the others, and therefore Charity obliges us to hope the best. This is certain, whether or no he's the better Christian, Sir Roger is clearly the better Gentleman, (that's somewhat) and at least as good, if not a better Englishman, we mean (for we wou'd not be mistaken) writes finer English than even Hobbs himself, which we need go no further to prove than his Fables; — one of which,

that of the old Lyon when his Teeth were out, &c. makes us say less of him than we otherwise shou'd, tho' he must not expect so fair Quarter from all the rest of the Forresters, most of whose Fur he has formerly made fly about their Ears.

Quest. 2. Whether the Samaritan Character, or vulgar Hebrew be the more ancient?

*Ans.* We shall resolve this Question with several others a-kin to it, in a discourse we intend in answer to some Questions relating to the Version of the LXX, which we have already receiv'd.

Quest. 3. Whether Milton and Waller were not the best English Poets? and which the better of the two?

*Ans.* We shall answer this double Question together: They were both excellent in their kind, and exceeded each other, and all besides. Milton was the fullest and loftiest, Waller the neatest and most correct Poet we ever had. But yet we think Milton wrote too little in Verse, and too much in Prose, to carry the Name of Best from all others; and Mr. Waller, tho' a full and noble Writer, yet comes not up in our Judgments to that, — *Mens diviniore atque os — Magna Sonaturum*, as Horace calls it, which Milton has, and wherein we think he was never equalled — His Description of the *Pandemonium*, his Battles of the Angels, his Creation of the World, his Digression of Light, in his *Paradise lost*, are all inimitable pieces, and even that antique Style which he uses, seems to become the Subject, like the strange dresses wherein we represent the old Heroes. The Description of *Samson's* Death, the artificial and delicate preparation of the Incidents and Narrations, the turn of the whole, and more than all, the terrible *Sayr on Woman*, in his Discourse with *Dalilah*, are undoubtedly of a piece with his other Writings; and to say nothing of his *Paradise regain'd*, whereof he had only finish'd the most barten part, in his Juvenile Poems, those on Mirth and Melancholly, an Elegy on his Friend that was drown'd, and especially a Fragment of the Passion, are incomparable: However, we think him not so general a Poet as some we have formerly had, and others still surviving.

Quest. 4. Whether the Manna of Calabria be not the same in Nature without any specifick difference, with that which Israel had in the Wilderness?

*Ans.* Supposing it were, the Miracle ceases not, for its falling in such a quantity, and at such times, had still been miraculous, as the Quails also were, tho' a natural Food. But its plain from several marks, as if on purpose given in the Text, that this was neither Calabrian nor Arabian Manna, nor any Substance that to our knowledge has its like in Nature. There are two sorts of Manna mentioned in profane Histories; one to which *Galen* and *Dioscorides* give that Name, which is no more than certain fragments of *Frankincense*, fit indeed for Men to present to God, but not for God to send as Food for Men. There's another sort, that in the Question, and which our Apothecaries so commonly use, which is a kind of a Honey-dew, falling indeed from Heaven, but in a natural way, yet so much resembling the true Manna, that thence the *Arabians*, on whose Mountains 'tis found in great plenty, gave it that Name; for whence else cou'd it have it, and what cou'd it signifie, this meaning on't being only a Portion in the Hebrew, because distributed to the people according to their wants: But this the *Israelites* Manna cou'd not be, as is plain from several different qualities to be found in either, they differ'd in Colour: The *Israelites* Manna was white, the Apothecaries yellowish. In consistence, the *Israelites* was hard and Fryable, it might be ground in a Mill, beaten in a Mortar, or baked in an Oven; whereas the other is rather glutinous or clammy, like other Honey. The other Manna the *Israelites* vary probably might



might have been before, *Moses* at least, who had bin so long conversant in the *Wilderness*; but this neither he nor any of 'em knew, but gave it a new name, as is usual to things that are new: *Natural Manna* either always falls, or else uncertainly; this fell not always, yet certainly as to its stated time, all the week except the *Sabbath*. Then it fell but in certain places from *Rephidim* to *Gilgal*, when they had need, and no longer, not before their provisions they brought out of *Egypt* was gone, nor after they had provision in *Canaan*, and did eat of the old Corn of the Land. This could not be a usual natural thing; if so, why might not *Armies* still pass those *Wildernesses* with the same provision? nor could it be casual, because it lasted for forty years, and each person found just enough for his Family. This putrified and stunk if kept till morning, if that shoud do so, the Apothecaries woud have but an ill Trade on't. Lastly, This was good, substantial, wholesome, nay pleasant and delicious Food; for which reason its call'd the Food of Angels, agreeable no doubt to the Taste of all who were fed by it — That has a faint *Physical Taste*, or at least a *Physical operation*, being purgative as all know; and if they shoud all have made but one meal on't, woud soon have made such work among six hundred thousand men, that all the whole *Wilderness* woud hardly have been room enough for 'em: And all these or most of 'em at least, are specifick differences between 'em, if any thing can be said to be so.

Quest. 5. *Whether H. Grotius, Buchanan, or Barklay wert the better Latin Poets?*

Ans. 'Tis a Maxim among the *French*, That 'tis impossible for a *Dutchman* to be a *Wit*; nor are they much more favourable to us *Insularies*, as they are commonly pleas'd to call us. But as there is nothing more barbarous than such general Reflections on whole Nations, (tho' as we've formerly said, some are more inclin'd to some sort of Vices than others:) So there's for the most part nothing more false; and that of *Juvenal* will ever hold — *Summos posse antimos, & magna exempla datus* — *Verecundum in patria crasseque sub are nasci*; of which there needs no greater proof than *Erasmus*, and the famous *Grotius* for *Holland*, and the other two Gentlemen nam'd in the Question for *Scotland*, the thick Fogs of one Countrey, and cold blasts of another not being able to nip those extraordinary Wits, who in spite of both grew so justly famous in the World. Its true, there are some Countreies, as well as some Soyls, where one thing seems not to grow so kindly as in others. Thus in Poetry, loves a cold Countrey, nor thrives well in it; nor for Example, did we ever yet hear of any famous Poet among the *Laplainers*; nay, or so much in either of the Northern Kingdoms, except *Saxo Grammaticus*, who was an excellent Scholar, and ingenious Person. Nor can we think *Holland* is a much kinder Soyl for this Art than the Isle of *Fersey*, of which Mr. Cowley so pleasantly in his *Miscellanies*, on occasion of a Copy of *William Pryn's* Verses sent him thence,

*Well, since the Soil then does not nat'rally bear  
Verle, who (a Devil) should import it here?*

And the same or worse its probable, he'd have said had he liv'd to see his own Works translated into *Dutch*, as 'tis said they are. For that great Man *Grotius*, he had Learning enough of other sorts to establish his Reputation as long as time lasts, without the gilding and Garniture of Poetry, wherein however he was far from contemptible. For *Barklay*, he has a good Fancy, and flowing stile both in Verse and Prose, and indeed they were too near a-kin, but we think there are no Miracles in either. For *Buchanan*, notwithstanding his Sentiments of Monarchy differ from ours, or at least that of our Kingdom from his, we think him both an honest Man, and an excellent Poet, far beyond either of the other, his Psalms having justly gain'd him Reputation through all the World, though not fine enough to please so nice a Taste as our Cowley's, who says tartly of 'em, that they come as far behind *David's* as his Countrey does behind *Judea*.

Quest. 6. *There is a Weed which grows among Corn very plentifully, call'd Cats-tail by the Countrey-people, of a pleasurable colour, which comes up but once in three years, and when it comes, does much injury: Now if your Society can resolve us why it comes but once in three years, and what method might be taken to destroy it, you'd do a great piece of service to the Countrey, which is extremely pester'd with it?*

To this we'll add another that's somewhat a-kin to't, and then endeavour to answer 'em both: *What's the reason that the Eyes of Beans in the Kid grow downwards some years, and upwards other, as this?*

Ans. We reply to both, that it becomes the Gravity of Philosophers first to be sure of matter of Fact, and then, and time enough too, to search after the Reason of the thing. The Querists must therefore give us leave to make Experiments three years about one, and 'till we are satisfi'd about t'other, and then we'll endeavour also to give them satisfaction.

¶ We design speedily to publish those Proposals concerning the *Natural and Artificial Rarities of England*, which we promised in the Preface to our 4th. Volume.

\* \* The Questions about the different length of days in the Southern part of the World, the precise time of our Saviours Nativity, the Altars being at the East end of the Church, the bowing at the Name of Jesus, the difference and Original of the *Julian Accounts*, &c. will be speedily answer'd.

\* \* We desire the Querist that sent us an account about some drops of blood, to inform of his Name and place of Abode.

\* \* We receiv'd the Quakers Letter, and shall return our answer to it in the 12 Numbers that compleat our 5th. Volume.

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¶ The third Impression of the Book entituled, *The New Martyrology, Or Bloody Assizes*, being quite sold off, a 4th. Impression of the said Book is speedily design'd. This is therefore to desire all those Countrey Gentlemen, and others who had Friends that suffer'd in the West of England, and elsewhere, under the Cruelties of *George Lord Jeffries*, to send to *John Dunton* at the *Raven* in the *Poultry*, all they have met with remarkable relating to the Lives, Tryals, Apprehensions, Imprisonments, Sufferings and Deaths of *Sir Edmundbury Godfrey*, *Arthur Earl of Essex*, *William Lord Russell*, *Coll. Sidney*, *Alderman Cornish*, *Mr. Colledge*, the late Duke of *Monmouth*, or his Expedition into the West, the E. of *Argyle*, *Coll. Rumbold*, *Mr. Dangerfield*, *Sir Thomas Armstrong*, *Capt. Walcott*, *Mr. Rouse*, *Mr. Benjamin* and *Mr. William Hewling*, *Mr. William Jenkins*, *Mr. Batiscomb*, the Lady *Lisse*, *Mrs. Gaunt*, *Mr. Nelthorpe*, *Mr. Charles Speak*, *Coll. Holmes*, *Mr. Hicks*, *Mr. Lark*, *Mr. Madders*, *Capt. Kjd*, *Dr. Temple*, *Mr. Parret*, *Capt. Annesley*, and *Capt. Mathews*. This is also to desire 'em to send to the forementioned place all that they have met with remarkable, in reference to any others not here recited who suffer'd in the West, &c. from the Year 1678. to 1689. or any thing they have met with remarkable relating to the Life and Death of *George Lord Jeffries*, that to this Book entituled, *The Bloody Assizes*, may be now compleated in this New Edition, to which will be added an *Alphabetical Table*, as also the Pictures of the most eminent Sufferers, (and the *Elegies and Epitaphs* that were written upon them) if sent to the *Raven* in the *Poultry* by the tenth of February next.

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